

[William Richard Hughes]

EISTEDDVODS WELSH POETRY WELSH BANDS

Form A

Circumstances of Interview No. 11

Vermont

C. F. Derven

Poultney

September 9, 1938

Subject——— Welsh- American Folklore— Eisteddvods— Welsh Poetry — Welsh- American Bands.

1. Interview at 2:30 p. m. on September 9, 1938
2. At the home of the informant.
3. Informant [md] Mr. William Richard Hughes, Fair Haven, Vt. The informant's residence is on U. S. Route 4 near the Fair Haven- Hydeville town lines. Although in Fair Haven town, it is nearer to Hydeville village, than the village of Fair Haven.
4. *Mr. David H. Hughes of Poultney, Vt., and Mr. Richard W. Hughes, son of the informant, of Poultney, advised the interview. *See Interview No. 10
5. Unaccompanied

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6. A short distance from the marker which indicates the above mentioned town lines, and standing on the north side of the concrete highway is the attractive home of the informant. Walking toward the house from the highway, I noticed the cleanliness, and orderliness of the property, the pure white coating of the house, and contrasting red of the barn, the well-kept grounds, and farmland. The surrounding fields and hills, stretching out for miles [around?], made an admirable setting for the buildings. The village roofs and spires of Fair Haven were visible miles away to the southwest. Nearby are two, or three other farms, but there are few inhabitants in that immediate locality. The nearest of these was, quite surprisingly, in the next town, although only a short distance to the east. And to add to the problem, it was discovered later that the next residence, afore-mentioned, was originally that of the informant's parents, while his present above was once that of his wife's parents. When he moved to the next town, he did not have to move far. Inside, the house is equally neat, clean, and attractive. It is over 100 years old, and thus has the low ceilinged rooms of many early Vermont houses. Additions were made to it at various times. The informant says that it was once a barn; that is, the oldest section. The east wing has slightly higher rooms. The interview took place in a small room with the informant seated on a low couch, and the interviewer at close proximity in an easy, mahogany rocker. Signs of a certain opulence presented themselves to view as the room was scanned. A radio, several pieces of good furniture, books, and the other necessary accoutrements were all in good taste. The interior, decorated in simple style, was pleasing and homelike in New England style. Although a fairly large house, it has none of the qualities which make large house unpleasant.

Form B Personal History of Informant Vermont C. P. Derven

Poultney

September 9, 1938

Subject——— Mr. William Richard Hughes, Fair Haven, Vt.

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1. Welsh ancestry
2. Born on December 28, 1845 at Blaenau- Festiniag, Wales.
3. Informant is married and has had seven children. There were four boys and three girls. One girl died in childhood. Mrs. Hughes, his wife, was born at Castleton Corners, Vt., July 25, 1849. Her ancestors came on the Mayflower to America. A daughter, Gladys, lives with the informant. A son, Richard William, lives in Poultney, Vt.
4. Lived at birthplace until coming to this country on May 1, 1853. Lived in Fair Haven on River Street, in the Roots House in North Poultney, in Jamesville, in Hydeville, and in Fair Haven where he lives now. He came to his present residence in 1888.
5. Attended school in Wales, in Fair Haven, and in No. Poultney. Education limited to grammar school.
6. Started working as a pit-man in slate quarries at the age of twelve, and worked in quarries until he was 80 yrs. old. Among others, he worked at the Eagle, Eureka, and Will O'Day quarries in the slate region. He was boss of the last named at one time.
7. Skilled rock-man. Interested in quarrying, and the customs, and traditions of his ancestors.
8. Welsh- Congregationalist.
9. The informant is a man of 93 years. He has been in voluntary retirement for 13 years. He is a tall, [larger?] boned man. In his youth he must have been very husky, because he retains the vestiges of robustness. He does not see or hear well due to his age; but his memory is good when aroused. He wears glasses, and behind them his eyes light with humor at some incident he is recalling. He has a fine fore-head, and his hair is not yet gray as one would expect. His voice is deep, and slow. Every word seems to be deliberated.

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10. The interview was conducted with the assistance of his daughter, Gladys Hughes, who repeated the remarks of the interviewer so the informant might understand better. Her direction, and assistance made the interview possible. A great deal of the material was brought forth after her suggestions. Mrs. Hughes, only four years younger than her husband, also added much valuable information. She is a small, old lady with white hair, and a parchment complexion. They are a fine old couple.

Form C Text of Interview No. 11 (Unedited)

Vermont

C. F. Derven

Poultney

September 9, 1938

Subject——— Welsh-American Folklore — Eisteddvods— Welsh Poetry— Welsh Bands.

Note— Due to the fact that the informant's daughter and wife assisted him, appropriate symbols will indicate their speeches.

Q. That is the earliest Eisteddved that you remember?

Inf. I was going to speak in one when I was 12 years old, or maybe 14 years old. My brother and I were going to recite the same piece. But he was drowned that day. It was the 4th of July.

D. That was in Fair Haven, wasn't it, dad?

Inf. Yes. We were going to speak a piece called, " By a Little Stream." It was in Welsh. (He recited some of it.). But my brother was drowned, so I never spoke it.

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Q. That would be about 78 years ago, if you are going on 92 as you told me.

Int. That's right.

D. How old was your brother when he was drowned, dad?

Inf. He was twelve.

D. Dad was two years older than his brother. It must have been 78 years ago. That would be 1860.

Q. Do you remember any Eisteddvods in Poultney about that time?

Inf. The quarries in Poultney opened after the Fair Haven quarries and the Welsh people came to Poultney later.

Q. Then it must have been some time before one was held in Poultney?

A. I never knew much about things in Poultney at that time. But it must have been much later.

Q. Would you say it was as much as ten years later.

Inf. I don't remember exactly. But I would say at least 10 yrs.

Q. Do you remember whether the adjudicator for that Eisteddvod in Fair Haven came from another place?

A. No. They were local people. There was more than one.

Q. Did they give money for prizes, or chairs?

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A. They gave both. I remember that Richard O. Pritchard from Fair Haven won a chair at an Eisteddvod.

Q. I suppose that they had a lot of music at them then.

A. Yes, they did. The Welsh people were better singers then.

Q. And they played instruments too?

A. Yes. They were great musicians.

Q. Do you remember the South Poultney Welsh Band?

A. Yes. I remember them. There was a Fair Haven Welsh Band too. Both of them played in Fair Haven once.

Q. Do you remember when that was?

A. No. I don't believe so.

Q. Was it when you were a boy?

A. Yes.

Q. Then it must have been around 1860 too.

Wife. I was about 16 when they played there. I remember it.

D. Mother is four years younger than dad. He must have been somewhere between 16 and 20. That would make it about 1864 or 1865.

Q. Was it before or after the Civil War? Answer of Inf; I think they played after the war. I am not sure whether they played any time before the war. But I think so.

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W. I don't remember them playing before the war. I remember torchlight parades before the war. They had music but I don't think it was the Welsh Band.

Q. Who was the leader of the band in Fair Haven?

Inf. John W. Jones was the leader.

Q. Did they play Welsh music? I was told that the South Poultney Band got its music from Wales.

Inf. Yes. The music came by mail from Wales for the Fair Haven Band.

Q. Were all the members Welsh?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember the uniforms of the Poultney Band.

A. Yes. They wore red coats.

Q. Blue hats and white pants?

A. That's right. The Fair Haven Band didn't have uniforms.

Q. I have a poem here that you probably know. It is " Y Bwthyn Bach To Gwellt."

A. Yes. I know that.

Q. (To daughter) Did your father ever teach you any short poem in Welsh. You told me that you don't speak Welsh much, but I thought that he might have known some short songs?

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D. Dad. What was that counting out game that grandfather taught you? It goes, " Bilsì, Balsì, Bayadd Y Re——".

inf. I don't remember it very well.

Note—— With his daughter's help the informant spelled out the words; in Welsh, for the interviewer. Bilsì, balsì, bysadd y re Jack O' Penny Llesta De Sibi se, Go a gw Tumpan torì, Torì tu."

Daughter; I am not sure about the last two lines. Dad doesn't remember it very well.

Inf. My father taught that to all of us.

D. It is like " Eenie, meenie, minie, moe," in English. The Welsh children use it for counting out.

Q. Then probably the words mean nothing. If the sounds are all right, then the verse is correct.

D. I am not sure of the spelling of the words.

Inf. I need to know others but I can't remember them.

Form D Extra Comment—Interview No. 11

Vermont

C. F. Derven

Poultney

September 9, 1938

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[Subject?] Welsh-American Folklore

The verse on Form C is accurately written: Bilsí, balsí, bysadd y re Jack O'Penny llesta de Sibi so, Go a gw Tumpan torí, torí tw."

The phonetical version (the closest to the Welsh sounds that can be produced in English) is: Bill see, ball see, bisath e ray Jack O'Penny thlesta day Sibi se, Go ah gee Tumpan tory, tory too."

Note: In respect of the fact that the writer does not understand the Welsh language, and has no authority for the above version's authenticity, it must be accepted an face value until such authority can be discovered.

Mr. Richard William Hughes, grandfather, of Mr. Richard W. Hughes (2nd) of Poultney, and father of the Informant arrived in America in 1853 with his family. The informant remembers hearing the sailors sing chanteys an they pulled up the ropes. He says that he and five other boys were on the ship crossing the ocean. The sailors let the boys pull with them; and taught them the song. The informant does not remember it because it was in English. He spoke very little English at that time. I regret that such a find could not be materialised.

Professor Paul D. Evans of the University of Vermont History Department interviewed the informant some time ago. The informant was able to give him copies of two Welsh papers necessary to fill gaps in a collection at Harvard University, which the professor was trying to complete. One of these papers is called, " Y Drich" (still published— begun in 1852.). The other is known as the " Cenhadwr." The informant had copies of both dating to early days.

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The informant has also aided many collectors of matter pertaining to the Welsh-American people; among them being, Mr. Benjamin Williams of Proctor, Vt.